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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings on the biographic and demographic characteristics of volunteer sport administrators and their involvement in sport organizations. The sample for the study consisted of volunteer sport administrators in 60 province-level sport organizations in Alberta, Canada. This study was done because of the dearth of research in this area and because of the importance of understanding these volunteers, their involvement, and their interests. An analysis of the data showed that more than 60 percent of the volunteer sport administrators were males and that the number of opportunities for male involvement in sport organizations were slightly higher than that for females. Results also indicated that the majority of administrators came from the middle and upper age brackets, with more than half over the age of 40. Almost half of the volunteers surveyed held a university degree. Sport volunteers came predominantly from the higher classes, and the majority of them were in high status occupations. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents had a British background, and a significantly greater number of the volunteers were affiliated with the Anglican church. It is also noted that a disproportionately large percentage of volunteer administrators lived in one of the two major cities in the province. Over 90 percent of the administrators had been involved in the sport for more than four years, and a large percentage of their families were also involved. Apart from administration, coaching occupied the greatest number of weekly hours of the sport administrator's time. A bibliography of 38 readings on the topic of voluntary participation in sports is appended. (JD)

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Volunteers in Amateur Sport Organizations: Biographic and Demographic Characteristics and Patterns of Involvement.

by

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Sociologists and investigators from related disciplines have frequently reported on the growing number of voluntary organizations in North America. Also they have noted that these voluntary organizations are an important foundation of our democratic society. Schindler-Rainman, Lippitt, and Cole (1977,p.5) suggest:

> A democratic social system - nation, state, community, organization or group - must depend to a high degree on the volunteered time and energy of its members for its maintenance, stability, growth and development.

Authors such as deTocqueville (1945), Axelrod (1956), Hausenknecht (1962) and Curtis (1971) have all suggested that North Americans are ardent joiners of voluntary organizations. Indeed it would be hard for Canadians and Americans to visualize a functioning society if all the volunteers were removed from it. Without the volunteer we would inevitably see the demise of the multitude of service programs within our country. The many funding organizations which solicit for charitable causes would cease to exist. Clubs and groups designed to foster expressive activities and to provide a unifying point for those of common interest would be no more. Public agencies would become increasingly bureaucratic, private agencies would disappear and as Lindeman (1952,p.1). suggests when this happens "democracy will have committed suicide" It would seem feasible then, in light of the aforementioned, to suggest that the phenomena of volunteers and voluntary organizations by their number and variety of purposes are essential elements of our society.

Another phenomenon which is "interwoven within the fabric of our society is a culturally accepted and endorsed activity called 'sport' " (Mitchelson, 1977, p. 2). Many writers, including Daniels (1969), Petrie (1975), McPherson (1975 a), Edwards (1976), Luschen (1976), and Snyder and Spreitzer (1976) have related how sport is an integral part of one or more aspects of the sociocultural system in which it exists. Over the period of the last one

hundred years, sport has grown rapidly from a local or regional activity to one which receives world wide attention. It is no longer an entity which can exist in isolation from other spheres of human life. The interdependence of sport and activities such as science, politics, economics and culture has an effect on the lives of many individuals as well as on society itself. Social values, beliefs and ideologies are transmitted through the medium of sport. Boyle (1963) has suggested that included in these concepts are such elements as social stratification, racial attitudes, fashions, language and ethical values. Edwards (1976,p.21) has written that an attack against sport in a particular society is often seen "as an attack on the fundamental way of life of that society as manifest in the value orientations it emphasizes through sport".

It may be seen then that both phenomena, sport and volunteerism, are essential features of our society as it presently exists. It has also been suggested by Mitchelson (1977,p.2) "that nowhere in our society is the volunteer utilized in a more significant or all-encompassing role than the volunteer coach, official or administrator in amateur sport" . Despite the essential nature of sport and volunteerism as components of our society and the essential nature of the volunteer to sport there have been few research undertakings which have attempted to study sport volunteers and their involvement in the voluntary sport organizations of which they are members. The fact that research is much needed in these areas has been noted by both McPherson (1975 b) and Luschen(1980).

It was a result of this dearth of information on volunteers in sport that this present study was undertaken. Its purpose was to generate information on volunteers in sport, their involvement in their sport organizations and also their involvement in non-sport related voluntary

organizations. At the time this paper was written only two studies were available that dealt specifically with volunteers in sport.[1] Of the papers which were available one was a study by Bratton (1970) which, as part of a larger study, looked at the biographic and demographic characteristics of volunteers involved in the administration of volleyball and swimming organizations at the national, provincial and local levels. The other available study was one by Beamish (1978) which looked at the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of national level volunteer sport administrators in 22 different sports. In light of the small amount of information in this area and the fact that this study would be conducted at a different level from the Beamish study, and also would include a greater number of sport organizations than both the previously mentioned research undertakings, it was felt that this study would be a relevant contribution to the area.

The sample for the study consisted of the volunteer sport administrators of 60 provincial level sport organizations in Alberta. A total of 238 volunteer administrators were identified and 165 (69%) of these submitted data for the study.

What is presented in this paper are the findings on the biographic and demographic characteristics of these volunteer administrators and some findings on their involvement in their sport organizations. Results from the study are compared, where possible, to those studies which have been conducted on volunteers in sport and also to sociological studies conducted on volunteers in contexts other than sport related ones.

The analysis of the data from the study showed that 66.7% of the volunteers involved in sport administration were males. This figure is slightly lower than those reported by Bratton (1970) who in his study on

volleyball and swimming administrators found that 74% of administrators in volleyball and 78% of administrators in swimming were males. Both studies are consistent with the works of Dotson (1951), Scott (1957), Palisi (1965) and Babchuk and Booth (1969) who all found the level of voluntary organization participation among males to be higher than that of females.

In this study the number of opportunities for male involvement was slightly higher than that for females. Of the 60 organizations surveyed 18 were either exclusively male organizations or organizations for sports which have traditionally had a predominantly male membership. Eight were either exclusively female organizations or organizations for sports which have traditionally had a predominantly female membership. Thirty-four organizations were viewed as representing sports that were equally available to both sexes. Taking into account the greater opportunity for male involvement the percentage of males involved was still significantly greater ($p<.05$) than the percentage of females.

A reason for the greater male involvement may be the socialization patterns of the sexes in regard to sport. Booth (1972) has noted that boys, particularly from the middle classes, tend to compete in teams more than girls and in some areas and some sports girls have not as yet been allowed to form teams and participate in sports. Booth (1972,p.184) feels this involvement in teams is important in relation to voluntary organization participation since,

> through team activity a boy learns group procedures and practices which he can later apply to role performances in voluntary associations.

The recent advancement of women in sport and the subsequent increased opportunities for female participation may effect a change in these patterns of socialization. This change could ultimately have an affect on the ratio

of males to females involved in the administration of amateur sport. Tiger (1969) has suggested, however, that social learning may not be the only factor influencing the males' predilection to affiliate. He feels males also have a biologically transmitted tendency to form bonds which are stronger and more stable than those of females.

In terms of the age of the volunteer administrators it was found that the majority come from the middle and upper age brackets with 57.6% of all respondents being over the age of 40 years. It is interesting to note that no one under 20 years of age held an administrative position on the provincial executive. While the ages of the participants in the various sports are not readily available it would seem logical to assume that a large percentage of participants in the sport organizations surveyed were under 20 years of age. Consequently, they had no one in a similar age bracket to represent them on their provincial executive. When the age of the sport administrators is categorized by sex the greatest difference in numbers of males and females participating is between the years 30-54. This difference may be partially explained by the fact that for many women these are the ages during which a family is raised. As a result of this, time may not be available for involvement in a sport organization.

The sample from each of the different sports was too small to draw definite conclusions but it would seem that the nature of the sport influences the age level of the administrators. Sports such as volleyball and basketball had no members on their administrative body under 44 years of age. Mens' and womens' curling had no one under 45 years and mens' and womens' lawn bowling had no one under 50 years of age.

The findings on the marital status of the sport administrators agree with those of Scott (1957), Hausknecht (1962), and Babchuk and Booth (1969) in

their studies on volunteers. All of these researchers found higher levels of participation in voluntary organizations among those who were married as compared to those who were single, widowed, or divorced. Approximately 84% of the respondents in this study were married. This percentage is significantly greater ($p<.05$) than the provincial figure of 62.9% (Alberta, Census Community Profile, 1976) for a similar age group to the sample in this study.

The socio-economic status of the sport volunteers was assessed using the three traditional measures: Education, Income and Occupation. The findings on the level of education attained by the sport volunteers revealed that approximately 44% held a university degree. This percentage is significantly greater ($p<.05$) than the figure of 7.4% for the provincial population (Alberta, Census Community Profile, 1976). Also, it should be noted that nearly half of this 44% had also completed post graduate studies at a university These figures for the levels of educational achievement of sport administrators are very similar to those reported by Bratton (1970) and Beamish (1978) in their studies. Bratton (1970) suggested that the large number of highly educated people among the administrators is linked to the achievement motive . This suggestion would seem logical given that a position as an administrator in a sport organization carries with it a certain amount of status. The qualities needed to achieve this level and attain this status may be similar to those qualities required to succeed in education. Another reason for the findings with respect to the high levels of educational achievement among administrators may be that sport administration is primarily the domain of the higher classes. Several sport sociologists including Webb (1969), Loy (1969) and Gruneau (1976) have shown that generally involvement in sport as a participant is greater among those from the higher socio-economic

levels.

With regard to the other two measures of socio-economic status both supported the finding that sport volunteers are predominantly from the higher classes. Over 73% of sport volunteers surveyed in this study had a total family income in excess of $22,000; this may be compared to 33% of families and unattached individuals living in Alberta who had a similar level of income. One reason which may be offered for the fact that volunteer sport administrators are usually from the higher income brackets is that only those who have these type of finances are able to take on these positions. Involvement as a volunteer in an administrative position in sport is not only an unpaid position but it may also necessitate individuals expending their own personal funds, and those from the lower income levels cannot afford this type of expenditure.

To assess the type of occupation in which they were employed administrators were asked to give their job title and a brief description of their job responsibilities. On the basis of their responses they were assigned an index from the Blishen socio-economic index for occupations in Canada (Blishen and McRoberts, 1976). Students and housewives are not ranked in the Blishen index and consequently they were excluded from this analysis, as were any respondents whose answers were too vague to be classified. The Blishen index ranges from 23 to 75. Fifty-nine percent of all classifiable respondents in this study had an index of over 60. Blishen in his article on social class and opportunity in Canada, (1967) noted that 9% of the population of the Province of Alberta scored over 60 on his index. Taking into account the time difference between Blishen's research and this study, it would still seem plausible to suggest that the majority of sport administrators hold high status occupations.

This finding is consistent with both Bratton's and Beamish's research on the educational levels of volunteers in that they also found volunteer administrators to be primarily recruited from the white collar categories of the labour force.

The social origins of the sport administrators was assessed using the occupation of the respondent's father. The occupation was assigned a score from the Blishen socio-economic index. Only 32.6% of the executives fathers scored above 60 on the index and 57% scored below 50. These findings are in contrast to those of Beamish (1978), who when studying sport administrators at the national level, found 51.8% of administrator's parents held high status occupations. The difference in these two findings may be a result of the two different levels of administration which were being studied.

Two explanations may be offered as to why, in this study, sport administrators show upward inter-generational mobility in regard to career patterns. Firstly Bratton (1970) has suggested that the type of people who gravitate toward administrative positions in sport are usually achievement orientated and consequently possess qualities similar to those required to move upwardly in the social system. Secondly it has been suggested by Curtis (1959) that sport organizations provide a setting in which a person who is ambitious and wishes to be upwardly mobile may become so without being set apart by their social background or current social status.

Investigation into the ethnic backgrounds of the sport volunteers revealed that 68.4% of the respondents had a British background; This figure is significantly greater ($p<.05$) than the provincial figure of 46.7%. and is consistent with the work of Bratton (1970) who also found a large percentage of sport administrators to have British ethnic backgrounds. This phenomenon may relate to the fact that the British are Canada's oldest and most

established ethnic group as well as to the fact that traditionally Great Britian has always had a strong sporting tradition.

In terms of the religious affiliations of the volunteer sport adminsitrators it was found that although the percentages differed, the five most frequently reported religious affiliations were the same as those which occured most frequently among the provincial population. When compared with the population of the province it was found that in this study there was a significantly greater ($p<.05$) number of sport administrators who were affiliated with the Anglican Church. This factor may be allied with the large percentage of those with a British background. It was also found that there was an underrepresentation of Catholics involved with the sport organizations. This finding is consistent with the works of Luschen (1972) and Gruneau (1976) who found Catholics underrepresented in sport in Germany and Canada respectively. It is also consistent with studies, on voluntary organizations in a non-sporting context, by Scott (1957), Wright and Hyman (1958), Hausknecht (1962), and Bell and Force (1971) who all found Catholics to be underrepresented in voluntary organizations.

To determine where the volunteer sport administrators lived in the Province of Alberta data was used from the original sampling list. Of the 238 administrators approximately 83% lived in the two major cities in the province. This figure is significantly greater ($p<.05$) than the 50.4% of the population of the province who lived in one of these two major cities (Edmonton Municipal Affairs. Inspection and Advisor Service Branch, 1978). This finding may suggest a tendency towards a centralization of the Provincial Sport Governing Body Executives. The Alberta Department of Recreation and Parks, Sport and Fitness Section has encouraged the decentralization of the sport organizations' programs and services by the use of zone representatives

on the provincial executive (Haslam, 1979). Despite this it would seem that the sport organizations have not responded to this encouragement since the findings of this study show that a disproportionately large percentage of administrators live in one of the two major cities in the province.

Beamish, (1978) in his study of national level sport administrators, found similar results to this study with 78% of the administrators being recruited from the major urban centers in Canada, and 43.8% recruited from Canada's five largest cities. These findings compare to figures of 51.1% and 35.7%, respectively, for the national population.

The mean length of time which sport administrators had lived in their present community was 17.4 years. Nearly 88% had lived there for four or more years tending to suggest that stability in place of residence may be an asset in attaining executive status, or that stability with respect to residence permits people more time to become involved in voluntary organizations.

In terms of their involvement in their sport over 90% of all sport administrators had been involved for four or more years. Female administrators tended to have been involved for slightly less time than their male counterparts. The mean length of time for involvement of males was 15.9 years and 14.6 years for females. However, nearly 70% of all volunteer administrators had been involved in their provincial organizations for only 6 years or less. Again, males tended to be involved slightly longer than females, the mean length of time for males being 7.3 years and for females 5.7 years. Presidents and those involved in the administration of coaching related programs had spent the longest length of time in their organizations.

Fifty-five percent (91) of all sport administrators had held one or more executive positions prior to assuming their current position. With the

exception of past presidents who for obvious reasons had all held a position prior to their current one, the two positions with the highest percentage of sport administrators who had held other executive positions, were the higher level positions of President (64%) and Vice-President (60%). With the exception of a large number of vice-presidents moving to the position of president there appeared to be no hierarchy of positions in the sport organizations. In most positions the average amount of time for which executive members had held these prior positions was slightly over two years.

An assessment of the amount of time that the volunteer administrators spent on organizational business revealed that, as would be expected, they had their greatest involvement time-wise both during their sports season and out of season on administrative tasks. It is interesting, however, to note that the amount of time volunteer administrators indicated that they spent on coaching, officiating, playing and other involvements in their sport was only slightly less than that time spent on administration. Apart from administration, coaching occupied the greatest number of weekly hours of the sport administrators time . As would be anticipated, responsibility during the season consumed more time than the same responsibilities out of season.

In nearly all categories (Administrator, Coach, Official, Player and Other) the difference in the amount of time males and females devoted to that particular category was very small. This is consistent with Booth's (1972) finding on non-sport related volunteers that time commitment among males and females is about the same. With the exception of time spent as a player single people commit less time in all categories to their roles as sport administrators than do those who are married. This can possibly be attributed to the opportunities for socializing that playing a sport provides, a factor which may be more important to those who are single than those who

are married.

When asked to indicate their area of responsibility when they were first recruited into their provincial sport organization a large number of sport administrators indicated that they became involved as administrators while they were still active officials, active players, active coaches, or when they were parents or relatives of participating athletes. These findings on area of involvement when first recruited would in part appear to be consistent with Booth and Babchuk's (1969) theory that people are recruited into voluntary organizations mainly through personal contact with people already involved in the organization. When the sport administrators' area of responsibility during initial involvement was broken down by sex, it was found that very few retired female coaches, or officials undertake administrative responsibilities with their provincial organizations.

Sport administrators were asked to indicate their highest level of involvement in their sport and how long they had been involved at this level as coaches, players, officials and administrators. The most frequently cited level for all areas of involvement was at the provincial level, with 25 administrators having coached at this level, 29 having played, 165 having been administrators and 31 having been officials (a similar figure of 31 was recorded for those who had officiated at the national level). When the sport administrators involvement was compared according to the position they held, it was found that in coaching vice-presidents had the greatest involvement at the national level and above. As players, seven presidents, seven vice-presidents, and seven past presidents had participated at or above the national level in their respective sports. As officials and administrators, presidents had the greatest involvement at the upper levels with 11 having officiated at the national level or higher and 32 having been administrators

of their sport at these same levels.

If involvement at the provincial level and above is considered, it was found that in every category, with very few exceptions, presidents, vice-presidents and past presidents have the most involvement. Bratton (1970) has suggested that the higher the level at which an administrative position is held, the more competitive are the individuals holding the positions. He based this suggestion on the fact that he also found those administrators who held office at a higher level had also participated at a higher level and had been more successful in their sport than those at the lower levels of administration. In this study a similar finding would seem to exist between the positions held. The higher status positions of president, vice-president and past president being filled by individuals having attained the higher levels in their sport as players, coaches, officials and administrators. It was also found that a number of the volunteer administrators were currently involved in high levels of their sport. Twenty-five were coaching at the national level or above, 21 were playing at this level, and 55 were officials.

In looking at the involvement of the sport administrator's family in his/her sport it was found that a number of sport administrators have son(s) or daughter(s) involved, particularly in a playing capacity. No information was available as to whether the sport administrators became involved because of their son's or daughter's interest or vice-versa. Only a small number of sport administrators had parents who had been involved or were currently involved in their sport in any capacity. A greater number of female administrators had spouses who were coaches or officials as compared with their male counterparts. More male sport administrators, however, had spouses who were players or administrators than did the female respondents.

This may be a reflection of the fact that males often coach and officiate female games, but the reverse is rarely seen. Male sport administrators were more likely to have sons involved in their sport than were female sport administrators, and female sport administrators were more likely to have their daughters involved than were the male administrators

In summary, it was suggested earlier in this paper that there is a lack of empirical evidence about sport volunteers and their involvement in their sport associations. This paper has provided information about certain aspects of these two areas The individuals who are elected or appointed to positions, as volunteer administrators in sport associations often singularly or in consultation with a limited number of the membership, make most, if not all, decisions pertaining to the administration of amateur sport in our country. In light of this fact it is imperative that we do all we can to understand who these people are, why they become involved in volunteer sport associations, and what we can do to keep them involved and interested in their quest to improve amateur sport in our country.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Since this paper was written two other studies have been published; One by Hollands and Gruneau (1980) deals with democratization and voluntary action, the other by Theberge (1980) deals with sport volunteers in Ontario.

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